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ABSTRACT

A review of 178 sources (articles, books, and other sources from 1971 through 1980, and frequently-cited earlier sources) on rural sociology and rural mental health indicated 4 major categories of definitions of rural: not explicitly stated, verbal (qualitative), homemade quantitative, and external quantitative. Sources were summarized as to author(s), publication date, focus (rural-urban comparison, rural sociology, rural health/mental health, rural human services), basis for defining rural, statistics employed (none, narrative, descriptive, univariate, multivariate), and findings. An unstated definition was used by 43% (77 sources); 19% (33) used verbal definitions, 15% (27) utilized homemade quantitative definitions, and 23% (41) used external quantitative definitions. Of 101 sources which defined rural, 22 used multiple components, but only 5 sources using homemade quantitative and none using external quantitative definitions employed multiple criteria. Rural was defined in terms of population by 90 sources (verbal = 25, homemade quantitative = 25, external quantitative = 40), but with little consensus on population criteria. The most common quantitative external population definitions, both based on census data, were those of the Department of Commerce (Rural versus Urban) and Office of Management and Budget (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area). Other criteria included occupation (14 sources), socioeconomic information such as education and income level (19), values (7), isolation (5), and government (4). (MH)

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A Review of the Definition of Rural

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Sophistication in defining rural does not seem to have kept pace with increased interest in rural psychology and community mental health. A sample of the rural sociology and rural mental health literature was reviewed and analyzed to determine the state of rural definitions. This review of 178 sources indicated four major categories of definitions: (a) not explicitly stated, (b) verbal, (c) homemade quantitative, and (d) external quantitative. It was concluded that there exists a need for more clearly delineated, multidimensional definitions of rural. Other results of the analysis and implications are discussed.

A Review of the Definition of Rural

Interest in rural psychology and community mental health has grown in

This review is based in part on the thesis of Jeanine Bosak. The authors would like to thank E. Alan Hartman for his assistance.

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recent years as evidenced by the Association for Rural Mental Health, *Journal of Rural Community Psychology*, Rural Interest Group of Division 27 (Community Psychology) of the American Psychological Association, and the *Handbook of Rural Community Mental Health* (Keller and Murray, in press). However, while attention paid to rural has increased, it seemed to the authors in their readings (see Table 1) that rigorous explorations of components and definitions of rural had not kept pace, that often there has been an assumption of generic rurality.

Ford (1966) called for a refined definition of rural to allow more precise classification and analysis. This is not an easy task as reflected in the work by Willits and Bealer (1967), who evaluated a composite definition of rural, using ecological, occupational and sociocultural variables at an individual and social level. They assumed that people and places differed in both number and amount of rural characteristics and concluded that being rural in regard to one component did not imply a high degree of rurality in regard to other components. Furthermore, their research indicated that breadth, power, and directionality of rural components were highly inconsistent. Their work underscores the complexities involved when attempting to define a rural area.

Detailed definitions of rural (delineating components and degree of rurality) would lead to better specification in the meaning of rurality, yielding more detailed and valid comparisons of different rural areas. The result would be more valid data and better information for understanding and application of this knowledge for public policy, models and delivery of health services, and distribution of government (federal, state, and local) funding for human services. To help achieve this goal this article presents an analysis of rural definitions.

Method

A sample of rural mental health and rural sociology literature was examined. The former was specified by a recent NIMH annotated bibliography of rural mental health literature (Flax, Wagenfeld, Ivens, & Weiss, 1979) and reading of relevant journals such as *Mental Hygiene*, *Community Mental Health Journal*, *Hospital and Community Psychiatry*, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, etc. The latter focused on the journal, *Rural Sociology*, and other publications discussed and referenced in it and the rural mental health readings. This literature was emphasized for review since it offered the best data source for application of rural definitions to community psychology and community mental health. The total review included articles, books, and other sources from 1971 through 1980 and earlier sources which were cited frequently. A rating form and four categories of rural definitions were developed and piloted on 40 references. The rural literature was summarized using: (a) author(s), (b) date of publication, (c) focus of writing (rural-urban comparison, rural sociology, rural mental health, etc.), (d) basis for defining rural, (e) statis-

tics employed (none, narrative, descriptive, univariate, multivariate, and (f) findings. The four rural definitional categories were:

1. *not stated:* the author(s) used the term rural without definition (e.g., that which is not urban, that which is not metropolitan, or not stated at all).

2. *verbal:* a definition was employed which relied on qualitative criteria, rather than quantitative, such as type of predominant occupational, sociocultural, or value systems of a region. Although specific characteristics were described, amounts were not presented (e.g., a small town and surrounding farm area comprised the rural region).

3. *homemade quantitative:* a definition included specific quantities of what was rural without reference to an external source (i.e., the definition was not cited as based on previously published work or data).

4. *external quantitative:* a definition indicated specific quantities of rural, utilizing external sources such as census data or previously published research.

For purposes of this paper only the four rural definitional categories will be reviewed and discussed. Presence or absence of statistical analyses and type of analysis were included to determine if comparing data between studies was possible. Detailed examination of statistical procedures was not carried out by the authors nor was an analysis of significant findings addressed. This information was provided so that it could be utilized by readers in conceptualizing and summarizing rural issues and research.

Results

The categorization of rural definitions (see Table 1) showed that of 178 references reviewed, 43% ($N = 77$) used a "not stated" definition of rural, 19% ($N = 33$) used a "verbal" definition, 15% ($N = 27$) utilized "homemade quantitative" definitions, and 23% ($N = 41$) used "external quantitative" definitions. Of the 101 sources which defined rural, 22 (22%) used multiple components; however, only five sources utilizing homemade quantitative and none using external quantitative definitions employed multiple criteria. This is based in part on the authors' decision to categorize Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA) as a singular definition (population). Although (see below) it includes social and economic components, these are not explicitly defined in Office of Management and Budget (1975) data.

Table 1
Review of Rural Literature[a]
NOT STATED DEFINITION

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Afonja, S A	1979	rural-urban comparison		Descriptive	Rural origin does not inhibit adjustment of workers to structure organized around rigid rules of behavior
Auerbach, A J In L H Ginsberg (Ed)	1976	rural-urban comparison		Descriptive	Found differences in population, sources of income, housing, transportation, use of leisure time
Bachtel, D C , & Molnar, J J	1980	rural sociology			
Bacon, L	1971	rural-urban comparison		Descriptive	Origin in rural south, more likely impoverished if never migrated; origin in rural north, poverty maximized if intra-regional migration to another rural place
Bankston, W B , & Allen, H D	1980	rural sociology		Multivariate	High rates of lethal violence in some areas seem subcultural; in others structural influences more important
Bealer, R C	1966	rural-urban comparison			
Bentz, W K , Edgerton, J W , & Hollister, W G	1971	rural mental health			
Bentz, W K , Edgerton, J W , & Kherlopian, M	1969	rural mental health		Descriptive	Education & income significantly related to tendency to identify cases as mentally ill
Bentz, W K , Edgerton, J W , & Miller, F T	1971	rural mental health		Descriptive	Differences found between rural public & rural teachers in attitudes toward mentally ill
Blevins, A L , Jr	1971	rural-urban comparison		Descriptive	Urban incomes higher than rural; urban hold more prestigious jobs

[a] *The "Statistics" and "Findings" columns do not apply for literature with no data collection or statistics, and thus are left blank.*

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Brown, D L	1978	rural urban comparison		Descriptive	Socioeconomic status is lower, and racial disparity is greater, in less urbanized counties
Carruthers, G E , Erickson, E C , & Renner, K N	1975 *Note 1*	community services			
Cedar, T , & Salasin, J	1979	rural mental health			
Cohen, J	1972	rural mental health		Descriptive	Utilization rates for outpatient services dropped with distance from agency
Copp, J H	1972	rural sociology			
Corney, R T	1968	rural mental health			
Dulaney, P E , & Woods, J	1975	community mental health			
Dunne, F	1980	rural sociology		Narrative	Rural young show substantial occupational stereotyping, especially when educational aspirations are lower
Durant, T J , Jr , & Knowlton, C S In T R Ford (Ed)	1978	rural sociology			
Edgerton, J W , & Bentz, W K	1968	rural mental health		Descriptive	Most rural studied unaware of mental health facility available, but seen as needed resource Most tolerate mentally ill, if not related
Eisenhart, M A	1978 *Note 2*	rural urban mental health comparison			
Eisenhart, M A	1979 *Note 3*	rural mental health			

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Eisenhart, M., & Ruff, T.	1980 *Note 4*	rural-urban mental health comparison			
van Es, J.C., & Whittenbarger, R.L.	1970	rural sociology		Univariate	Social participation is related to stratification position. Within social strata, participation in formal political system is related to other forms of social participation.
Featherman, D.L.	1971	rural-urban comparison		Multivariate	Effect of paternal occupational status is most direct in the early years of a man's career.
Flora, C.B., & Johnson, S. In T.R. Ford (Ed.)	1978	rural sociology			
Ford, T.R.	1966	rural-urban comparison			
Ford, T.R., & Sutton, W.A., Jr. In J.H. Copp (Ed.)	1964	rural sociology			
Goldschmidt, W.	1978	rural sociology		Univariate	Support agrarian thesis that family farms are conducive to democratic rural communities.
Grasmick, H.G., & Grasmick, M.K.	1978	rural-urban comparison		Univariate	Farm family background significantly effects modernity, even with control for other variables.
Gurian, H.	1971	rural mental health			
Hackler, T.	1979	rural-urban mental health comparison			
Haga, W.J., & Folse, C.L.	1971	rural sociology		Descriptive	Social boundaries differ from trade boundaries. As size of town decreases, number of retail items bought decreases, but affectional relationships persist. Greater number identifying with smallest towns born near residence than those identifying with larger towns.

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Hanson, I R In E W Hassinger & L R Whiting (Eds)	1976	rural-urban health comparison			
Hargrove, D S In P A Keller & J D Murray (Eds)	in press	rural mental health			
Higgins, W M In P A Keller & J D Murray (Eds)	in press	rural mental health			
Hinkle, J E , & Ivey, A E	1969	rural mental health		Descriptive	Rural attitudes of residents and community leaders toward mental health not found to differ much
Hobbs, D J	1980	rural sociology			
Hollister, W G In L H Ginsberg (Ed)	1976	rural mental health			
Huessy, H R In H H Barten & L Bellak (Eds)	1972	rural mental health			
Hunter, W F	1973 *Note 5*	rural mental health			
Jeffrey, M J , & Reeve, R E	1978	rural mental health			
Johnson, R L , & Knop, E	1970	rural-urban comparison		Multivariate	Community satisfaction is a multidimensional variable Urban residents more satisfied with shopping, medical facilities, teachers, work opportunities, entertainment Rural residents more satisfied with local democratic processes, geographical milieu, salary scale
Jones, J D , Robin, S S & Wagenfeld, M O	1974	rural mental health		Descriptive	Rural centers spend more time in outreach than urban Staffing patterns differ Community mental health ideology endorsed more strongly by rural staff

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Keller, P.A., & Prutsman, T.D., In P.A. Keller & J.D. Murray (Eds.)	in press	rural mental health			
Korsching, P.F., & Sapp, S.G.	1978	rural sociology		Descriptive	Official procedures used to estimate unemployment in rural areas lack validity to some degrees, & may underestimate the actual employment.
Ladewig, H., & McCann, G.C.	1980	rural sociology		Multivariate	Mass media score most salient social & economic characteristic influencing one's level of community satisfaction.
Larson, O.F., & Rogers, E.M. In J.H. Copp (Ed.)	1964	rural-urban comparison			
Lee, E.S.	1972	rural-urban comparison		Descriptive	Rural-urban differences in fertility rates are disappearing. In rural, the lower the educational attainment, the higher the fertility ratio.
LeVeen, E.P.	1979	rural		Descriptive	Imposition of Reclamation Act would benefit rural community.
Lowe, G.D., & Pinhey, T.K.	1980	rural sociology		Descriptive	Rural people in general, or farm people in particular, do not place lower value on formal education as compared to urban counterparts.
Mermelstein, J., & Sundet, P.	1973	rural mental health			
Mermelstein, J., & Sundet, P. In L.H. Ginsberg (Ed.)	1976	rural social work			
Miller, M., & Ostendorf, D. In P.A. Keller & J.D. Murray (Eds.)	in press	rural mental health			
Morrison, J. In L.H. Ginsberg (Ed.)	1976	rural-urban comparison			
Murray, J.D., & Keller, P.A.	Unpublished Manuscript 1980 *Note 6*	rural mental health			

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Nelsen, H.M., Frost, E.	1971	rural sociology		Descriptive	Rural respondents more anomic. Rural say schools worse than elsewhere. Relationship between residence & success significant, with response "education" more common in rural.
Nelsen, H.M., Yokley, R.L., & T.W. Madron.	1971	rural-urban comparison		Descriptive	Inverse relationship between residence and conservatism.
Nelson, A.D. In E.W. Hassinger & L.R. Whiting (Eds.)	1976	rural health			
Nelson, J.I., & Grams, R.	1978	rural sociology		Univariate	Industrial homogeneity related to interaction.
Ozarin, L.D., Samuels, M.E., & Biedenkapp, J.	1978	community mental health			
Pahl, R.E.	1966	rural-urban comparison			
Perez, L.	1979	rural sociology			
Price, M.L., & Clay, D.C.	1980	rural sociology		Multivariate	Migration is strongly associated with perceived problems in municipal service, education, social welfare, health care, recreation, & cultural activities.
Riggs, R.T., & Kugel, L.F.	1976	rural mental health			
Salcedo, R.N., Read, H., Evans, J.F., & Kong, A.C.	1971	rural-urban comparison		Narrative	Farmers significantly more favorable toward pesticide industry than city dwellers.
Schultz, L.G. In L.H. Ginsberg (Ed.).	1976	rural social work			
Schwab, J.J., Warheit, G.J., & Holzer, C.E.	1974	rural-urban, mental health comparison			

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Smith, C.L., Hogg, T.C., & Reagan, M.G.	1971	rural sociology		Descriptive	Economic development of Sweet Home.
Southern Regional Education Board. In L.H. Ginsberg (Ed.)	1976	rural social work			
Steffensmeier, D.J., & Jordan, C.	1978	rural-urban comparison		Descriptive	Trends of rural female crime parallel urban female crime, except female levels of larceny-theft are increasing faster in urban woman.
Stojanovic, E.J.	1972	rural sociology		Descriptive	Low-income rural were successfully informed of public program for aged.
Tienda, M.	1979	rural-urban comparison		Multivariate	Rural children more economically active than urban (Peru).
United States Department of Health, Education & Welfare	1977	rural-urban comparison			
White House Conference Aging, 1971. In L.H. Ginsberg (Ed.)	1976	rural sociology			
Wilson, V.E. In E.W. Hassinger & L.R. Whiting (Eds.)	1976	rural health			
Wylie, M.L. In L.H. Ginsberg (Ed.)	1976	rural social work			

VERBAL DEFINITION

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Bealer, R.C., Willits, F.K., & Kuvlesky, W.P.	1965	rural sociology	population, occupation, socioeconomics		

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Beers, H W In J B Gittler (Ed)	1957	rural sociology	population		
Bentz, W K , & Edgerton, J W	1970	rural mental health	population	Narrative	Community leaders & general public similar in attitudes toward mentally ill Public more likely to ascribe illness to heredity, morality, organicity
Berry, B , & Davis, A E	1978	community mental health	population, occupation		
Bopegamage, A , & Kulahalli, R N	1972	rural-urban comparison	population, socioeconomics, institutions, marketing	Descriptive	Urbanization has varying impact on different castes and occupations, with other factors influencing variation
Buxton, E B In L H Ginsberg (Ed)	1976	rural social work	population, socioeconomics, education, politics		
Copp, J H In E W Hassinger & L R Whiting (Eds)	1976	rural health	location		
Daniels, D N	1967	rural mental health	population, isolation, economics, government		
Eisdorfer, C , Altrocchi, J & Young, R F	1968	rural mental health	population, occupation, density, income		
England, J L , Gibbons, W E & Johnson, B L	1979	rural sociology	population, occupation, economics	Multivariate	Values best predicted by variables indicating position of respondent in class structure of community, maturity, stratification of community, & rurality Industrialization & organizational revolution contribute modestly

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Falk, W.W., & Pinhey, T.K.	1978	rural sociology	ethnomethodological		
Fischer, C.S.	1980	rural-urban comparison	population		
Flax, J.W., Ivens, R.E., Wagenfeld, M.O., & Weiss, R.J.	1978	rural mental health	population, socioeconomics, values		
Ford, T.R. In T.R. Ford (Ed.)	1978	rural sociology	population, socioeconomics, values, environment, technology		
Form, W.H.	1971	rural-urban	father's occupation	Descriptive	No differences in adaptation found between workers from rural & urban backgrounds within countries. More urban workers skilled, & educational achievement higher in urban.
Gecas, V.	1980	rural sociology	population	Multivariate	Statistional obstacles have at least as much influence on motivational variables as the more commonly stressed family interaction variables.
Hassinger, E.W. In E.W. Hassinger & L.R. Whiting (Eds.)	1976	rural health	population, occupation, socioeconomics, values, age distribution, isolation		
Hollingsworth, R., & Hendrix, E.M.	1977	rural mental health	population		
Howell, F.M.	1980	rural	population, socioeconomics	Multivariate	Among women who marry soon after high school, access to higher education has most influence on husband's occupational status. Process of attainment in marriage differs for white & black women.

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Huessy, H.R. In S.E. Golann & C. Eichorfer (Eds.)	1972	rural mental health	population, occupation, socioeconomics		
Kraenzel, C.F., & Macdonald, F.H.	1972	rural mental health	density		
Larson, O.F. In T.R. Ford	1978	rural-urban comparison	population	Descriptive	Activity & work/job attachment significantly higher in rural. Rural more puritanical & more religious.
Mirande, A.M.	1970	rural-urban comparison	population	Descriptive	More rural dwellers visited relatives regularly. Friendship participation more extensive in urban.
Perry, H.L.	1980	rural sociology	population		
Schnore, L.F.	1966	rural-urban comparison	occupation, industry		
Sorensen, J.L. & Hargreaves, W.A. In P.A. Keller & J.D. Murray (Eds.)	in press	rural mental health	population		
Streib, G.F.	1970	rural-urban comparison	occupation	Descriptive	Farmers gave more traditional answers to intergenerational dilemmas than urban males. Differences even greater between high socioeconomic status categories.
Swanson, B.E., & Swanson, E. In E.W. Hassinger & L.R. Whiting (Eds.)	1976	rural health	socioeconomics		
Tranel, N. In H. Grunebaum (Ed.)	1970	rural mental health	occupation, socioeconomics, values		
Wedel, H.L.	1969	rural mental health	population		

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Wilkinson, K P. In P A. Keller & J D. Murray (Eds.)	in press	rural sociology	population, socioeconomics, values, spatial arrangement		
Wilson, V E.	1971	rural medical health	population, socioeconomics		
Young, R C., & Larson, O F.	1970	rural sociology	population, school district	Descriptive	Position in community structure limits social interaction. Structural position influences perception of community structure. Potential for interaction increases identification & participation in community structure.

HOMEMADE QUANTITATIVE DEFINITION

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Baumheier, E C., Derr, J M., & Gage, R W.	1973	rural human services	population		
Bischoff, H G W.	1976 *Note 7*	rural mental health	population		
Bokemeier, J L., & Tait, J L.	1980	rural sociology	population	Narrative	Women power actors have less community efficacy than men. Degree of community efficacy of women greater relative to socio-expressive issues than to instrumental issues.
Christenson, J A.	1979	rural sociology	population	Multivariate	Value-based push-pull forces seem to operate primarily on non-metro to metro movers.
Conning, A M.	1971	rural sociology	population, socioeconomics	Narrative	More differentiated community has higher rate of rural-urban migration.

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Duncan, O.D. In J.P. Gibbs (Ed.)	1961	rural-urban comparison	population	Descriptive	Density declines with decreased community size. Farming decreases as community size increases. More males in farm & nonfarm than urban. Elderly increase as size decreases, but farm, non-farm more like urban. % high school graduates, white collar, & income decreases with community size.
Haller, A.O., & Saraiva, H.U.	1972	rural sociology	isolation	Multivariate	An 8-item level-of-living scale is shown to be valid, reliable, & an economical indicator of the socio-economic status factor measured by all stratification instruments used.
Hassinger, E.W., Benson, J.K., & Holik, J.S.	1972	rural sociology	population (township size, largest place, density)	Descriptive	Church programs differ with size of township and church-sect type.
Hollister, C.D., Bast, D., & Dolezal, R. In L.H. Ginsberg (Ed.)	1976	rural sociology	population		
Hougland, J.G., Kim, K., & Christenson, J.A.	1979	rural sociology	population	Univariate	Socioeconomic status is positively associated with both general membership & the degree of participation in voluntary organizations.
Miller, M.K., & Crader, K.W.	1979	rural-urban comparison	population, occupation, socioeconomics, isolation	Multivariate	Urban economic satisfaction higher than rural. Impact of residence on community satisfaction is maintained when controlled for personal characteristics.
Molnar, J.J., Purohit, S., Clonts, H.A., & Lee, V.W.	1979	rural sociology	population income, education	Multivariate	Changes in satisfaction with individual services has little to do with changes in overall community satisfaction.
Napier, T.L.	1973	rural-urban comparison	population	Univariate	Urban socioeconomic status higher. Urban more committed to formal education. Rural more modernistic. Urban more satisfied with community services. Urban more mobile. Educational achievement, income, fertility ratio, & median age differences are converging.

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Nelsen, H.M., Reed, J.P., & Tish, R.E.	1971	rural-urban comparison	population	Multivariate	Urban prisoners more likely to score high on Anti-law Index.
Nelsen, H.M., & Yokley, R.L.	1970	rural-urban comparison	population	Descriptive	Rural less liberal on civil rights scale than urban. Ministers more liberal than elders.
Nelson, J.I.	1973	rural-urban comparison	population	Narrative	Found moderate relationship between aspirations & community size.
Ozarin, L.D.	in press	rural mental health	population		
Rogers, D.L., Pendleton, B.F., Goudy, W.J., & Richards, R.O.	1978	rural sociology	population	Multivariate	Change in manufacturing & in levels of income are related when employment data used. Population size & change, distance to SMSA, & type of industry does not effect relationship.
Slesinger, D.P.	1980	rural-urban comparison	population	Multivariate	Mother's education, age, number of children, & place of medical services for well care is significantly related to preventive scores.
Swanson, L.E., Jr., Luloff, A.E., & Warland, R.H.	1979	rural sociology	population	Multivariate	A large segment of nonmetro population is willing to move if given good employment opportunity.
Tremblay, K.R., Jr., Dillman, D.A. & Van Liere, K.D.	1980	rural sociology	population	Narrative	Nonmetro residence & single family home ownership is preferred.
Tremblay, K.R., Jr., & Dunlap, R.E.	1978	rural-urban comparison	population	Descriptive	Rural-urban differences stronger when concern is assessed for environmental problems at community, not state, level. Urban more concerned with environment than rural farmers & non-farmers.
Wang, C.S.Y., & Sewell, W.H.	1980	rural-urban comparison	population	Multivariate	Influence of residential variables is to alter magnitude of effects of occupation on earnings.
Warner, P.D., & Burdge, R.J.	1979	rural-urban comparison	population	Univariate	With respect to perceived adequacy of community services: subjective & objective appraisals are consistent; urban correctly perceive their services as more adequate; personal characteristics do not contribute much.

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Willits, F.K., & Bealer, R.C.	1967	rural sociology	occupation, socioeconomics, ecology	Multivariate	Being rural in regard to one component does not imply high degree of rurality in regard to other components. Composite definition with constant weightings of little use in understanding influence of components.
Woodrow, K., Hastings, D.W., & Tu, E.J.	1978	rural-urban comparison	population	Descriptive	Urban average life expectancy at birth higher. Rural marry younger, more likely to ever marry, & remarry younger. Slightly greater likelihood of divorce in urban.
Zuiches, J.J., & Rieger, J.H.	1978	rural sociology	population	Descriptive	Preference for rural area greatest among oldest cohort. Progressive increase in initial preferences for rural among more recent cohorts. Direct association between preferences & short & long term residential mobility.

EXTERNAL QUANTITATIVE DEFINITION

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Beale, C.L. In T.R. Ford (Ed.)	1978	rural sociology	population (rural-urban)		
Beale, C.L., & Fuguitt, G.V. In K.E. Taeuber, L.L. Bumpass, & J.A. Sweet (Eds.)	1978	rural-urban comparison	population (SMSA)		
Blackwood, L.G., & Carpenter, E.H.	1978	rural sociology	population (rural-urban, SMSA)	Multivariate	Expressed concern for population size related to size of place preferences. Antiurbanism related to migration potential of large city residents. Antiurbanism important in determining preference for more isolated towns.

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Bridges, J.C.	1972	rural sociology	population (rural-urban)	Descriptive	No support for idea that persons associated with native religion will be found in greater proportion in rural districts
Brown, K.M.	1971	rural-urban comparison	population (SMSA)	Descriptive	Urbanization gradients of 1960 data in same direction as those reported by Duncan, 1950 data, but degree of slope less.
Butler, J.E., & Fuguitt, G.V.	1970	rural sociology	population (rural-urban)	Univariate	Positive association between small town population change & distance to nearest large town when large town is slightly larger. If nearest large town much larger, then negative association. WI. small towns show tendency to grow when near large town, regardless of large town size.
Clayton, T.	1977	rural sociology	population (SMSA)		
Cordes, S.M. in E.W. Hassinger & L.R. Whiting (Eds.)	1976	rural health	population (SMSA)		
Derr, J.M.	1973	rural sociology	population (rural-urban, SMSA)		
Fuguitt, C.V.	1971	rural sociology	population (SMSA)	Descriptive	Incorporated non-SMSAs grew in 1950, '60, '70. More places move to larger size classes than move down. Places with larger initial size show more & quicker growth.
Gertz, B., Meider, J., & Pluckhan, M.L.	1975	rural mental health	NIMH Directory		
Ginsberg, L.H. In L.H. Ginsberg (Ed.)	1976	rural social work	population (SMSA)		

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Hasinger, E W , & Holik, J S	1970	rural sociology	population (rural-urban)	Descriptive	Greater number of rural churches since 1952. Sects experienced greater proportion of additions than churches
Heaton, T B	1980	rural sociology	population (SMSA)		
Hougland, J G , Jr , & Sutton, W A , Jr	1978	rural sociology	population (Kruegel, 1966)	Multivariate	Number of volunteers is useful predictor of inter-organizational participation
Johansen, H E , & Fuguitt, G V	1979	rural sociology	population, (SMSA)	Multivariate	Weak association between urban accessibility & retail change is due to negative direct effect of urban accessibility on retail change, offset by positive indirect effect operating through population change
Jones, J D., Wagenfeld, M O , & Robin, S S	1976	rural mental health	population (NIMH Directory)	Narrative	Rural show more staff hours invested in "program-oriented consultation" than urban, inner city, or suburban. Rural centers see selves as different from medical model
Kahn, E J , Jr	1973	population distribution	population (SMSA)		
Kane, W J	1978	rural health	population (rural-urban)		
Kirschenbaum, A	1971	rural sociology	population (SMSA)	Descriptive	No increase in volume on migration from metro to nonmetro found
Lichter, D T , Heaton, T B , & Fuguitt, G V	1979	rural-urban comparison	population (SMSA)	Multivariate	Migration streams less selective of young & high socioeconomic groups since 1970, but decline is less prominent for nonmetro. Age structure, education, & occupation composition more dissimilar. Migration has pushed age structure up & SES status down in nonmetro areas
Maret, E , & Chenoweth, L	1979	rural sociology	population (SMSA)	Multivariate	Differences in supply & demand factors related to labor market activity between rural metro & rural nonmetro women

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
McGinn, N.F.	1971	rural-urban comparison	population (rural-urban)	Multivariate	Urban knowledge is acquired through exposure to cities. Once person lives in city, increase in involvement in social system leads to increase in urban knowledge.
Ploch, L.A.	1978	rural sociology	population (rural-urban)		
Pryor, R.J.	1968	rural sociology	population (rural-urban)		
Rainey, K.D., & Rainey, K.G. In T.R. Ford (Ed.)	1978	rural sociology	population (SMSA)		
Rieger, J.H.	1972	rural sociology	population (rural-urban)	Descriptive	Most men raised in rural place would leave community of orientation. Preponderance of movement is cityward. Migrants have higher levels of occupational attainment. Mean SES of nonmigrants in 1957 exceeds that of fathers of migrants.
Schwarzweller, H.K.	1979	rural sociology	population (SMSA)		
Smith, L.W., & Petersen, K.K.	1980	rural-urban comparison	population (rural-urban)	Descriptive	No support for Stouffer's suggestion that higher tolerance level of urban may be due to having lived in both worlds.
Solomon, G.	Unpublished Manuscript *Note 8*	rural mental health	population (SMSA)		
Steeves, A.D.	1972	rural sociology	occupation (census-farm)	Descriptive	As proletarianization rises, capital commitments to agriculture decrease. Degree of proletarianization related to type of farm enterprise, age, education, income, & political preference.

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Focus	Basis of Definition	Statistics	Findings
Sweet, J.A.	1972	rural-urban comparison	population (rural-urban)	Multivariate	75% of working farm women in 1960 were engaged in nonfarm occupations.
Tarver, J.D.	1972	rural sociology	population (SMSA)	Descriptive	Industrial structure of towns at start of decade influenced population trends in ensuing decade.
United States Department of Health, Education, & Welfare	1974	rural mental health	population (SMSA)	Descriptive	Rural centers younger than non & part-rural. 90% of rural centers in poverty catchment area. Rural had more inpatient than part-, but less than non-rural. Out-patient greater at non-rural.
United States Department of Health, Education, & Welfare	1978	rural mental health	population (SMSA)		
Veevers, J.E.	1971	rural-urban comparison	population	Descriptive	Rural woman less likely to be childless than urban woman.
Wagenfeld, M.O., & Robin, S.S. In L.H. Ginsberg (Ed.)	1976	rural mental health	population (SMSA)	Narrative	Rural centers view organization as social service. Urban centers view is medical. Rural centers more activist in organizational role than urban. Rural more subject to discrepancy between organizational & personal expectation.
Weber, G.K.	1976	rural sociology	population (rural-urban)		
Wilkinson, K.P. In T.R. Ford (Ed.)	1978	rural sociology	population (rural-urban)		
Witt, J.	1977	rural sociology	population (rural-urban)		
Zuiches, J.L., & Brown, D.L. In T.R. Ford (Ed.)	1978	rural sociology	population (SMSA)	Narrative	Growth of young & old ages in nonmetro. Proportion of males declining in nonmetro. Household size declining faster in nonmetro. Nonwhite declined in nonmetro. Education, % white collar, & income increasing in nonmetro.

Ninety sources defined rural in terms of population (verbal, $N = 25$, homemade quantitative, $N = 25$, external quantitative, $N = 40$). As definitions became quantified, population becomes the sole component studied. "Rural-urban" and SMSA were the two primary population definitions in Table 1; both are based on census data. However, there was little concensus on a population criterion to define rural; it was applied to any town/city with a population less than 2,500 to less than 40,000. Other criteria used to define rural included occupation (14 sources), such as farming versus manufacturing; socioeconomic (15 sources), such as education and income levels; values (7 sources), which included importance of family and work ethic factors; isolation (5 sources), such as distance to a major city or university; and government (4 sources), such as type, or dependency on or autonomy from neighboring towns.

To determine if definitions were becoming more quantified in recent years, sources published since January 1978 ($N = 73$) were inspected. In this subsample, 42% utilized homemade or external quantitative definitions versus 38% of all sources reviewed; 57% of the sources reviewed since January 1978, fell in the not stated and verbal categories as compared with 62% of all literature reviewed.

In the review, 48 sources presented a rural-urban comparison. It was found that 23 of these (48%) were based on "not stated" definitions of rural, seven utilized "verbal" definitions, 11 "homemade quantitative," and seven "external quantitative" definitions. Descriptive or inferential statistics related to rural-urban differences were presented in 32 cases (non stated, $N = 9$; verbal, $N = 7$; homemade quantitative, $N = 10$; external quantitative, $N = 6$).

The two most widely used quantitative external definitions were those based on United States Bureau of the Census data, Rural versus Urban (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1970), and Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) (Office of Management and Budget, 1975). For example, a National Institute of Mental Health study published in 1974 (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare) defined a rural town as having a population of less than 2,500 and a rural county as having at least 50% of its population residing in towns no larger than 2,500. The rural county definition then was used to define catchment areas of community mental health centers. The SMSA definition was formed on the basis of three criteria: population size, metropolitan character, and integration (Maret & Chenoweth, 1979). Briefly, a SMSA was defined as an area which included one city with 50,000 or more inhabitants, or a city with at least 25,000 inhabitants, which together with contiguous places, had a combined population of 50,000 and constituted for general economic and social purposes a single community, provided that the county had a total population of at least 75,000.

Discussion

The review of rural literature supported the belief that a wide variety of

definitions of rural have been employed. Comparative analysis of hypothesized rural-urban differences, replication studies, and comparability of different rural areas all are difficult because of lack of operational definitions (not stated and verbal) and because few authors are using the same definitions. When rural was defined it was treated as a unidimensional concept in most literature; when rural was quantified, reliance was almost totally on population criteria. Disappointingly, there is no strong trend toward more quantified explorations of the meaning of rural; the proportions of "not stated" and "verbal" definitions utilized since 1978 was comparable to those used in the entire literature sample reviewed.

This is not to argue that quantified definitions of rural are in and of themselves the goal; they have limits. They rely almost totally on population data, omitting such important considerations as sociocultural or value factors. They also may mask changing lifestyles and migration trends. For example, to define an area as rural or urban may overlook differences between rural and urban counties adjacent or nonadjacent to a SMSA (Beale & Fuguitt, 1978; Heaton, 1980; and Schwarzweller, 1979) (Adjacent counties have greater accessibility to services and employment within an SMSA than do nonadjacent counties and thus may be more urban than rural in nature).

It is evident that multidimensional definitions of rural which focus on sociocultural or occupational factors as well as population criteria are not in wide use. One example being explored by the authors in a study of mental health administrators combines a rural definition based on population density and center concepts with SMSA influences. This taxonomy of rural has four parts: (a) an urban SMSA baseline for comparison purposes, (b) rural county in a SMSA, (c) rural county adjacent to SMSA, and (d) rural county nonadjacent to SMSA. A county with a city of 10,000 or more (the population center) in which 50% of the population or more live in towns/cities of 2,500 or greater was defined as urban. Any county not meeting either of these criteria is defined as rural.

This conceptualization of a heterogeneous rural has application in the study of mental health management and systems. Selection and orientation of personnel for mental health positions would focus on specific components of rural in a catchment area and how these influence both work and nonwork parts of these professionals' lives (cultural events available, school system quality and type, shopping, medical facilities available, etc.). A detailed inspection of rural would aid in understanding the career paths and turnover of mental health professionals. Rather than asking whether the generic rural catchment area has difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, interest would be on whether differences occur between rural mental health systems in counties nonadjacent to SMSA, counties adjacent to SMSA, and in SMSAs. Do these rural systems differ in salaries for mental health professionals, roles mental health professionals fill, or turnover rates? For example, data under analysis indicate that retention of mental health administrators may be "better" in urban and nonadjacent rural areas, than in adjacent rural catchment areas. These

may be the starting systems in mental health management career paths. Further research is needed but the point is that propinquity of rural systems to SMSA may make these adjacent systems significantly different from nonadjacent rural counterparts.

In conclusion, the authors are not arguing for any one specific definition of rural but for attention paid in defining and conceptualizing rural equal to the energy currently devoted to rural problems and issues.

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